



News from Congressman

Tom Lantos

**12th Congressional District of California
San Mateo/San Francisco**

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**FOR INFORMATION CALL
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Flu Vaccine Shortage Raises Disturbing Questions About U.S. Public Health Safety Oversight, Lantos Says

Washington, DC – Congressional investigation of the crisis over the nation's flu vaccine supply has revealed that safeguards must be re-examined, and new ways to bring more vaccine manufacturers into the marketplace should be considered, Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA) said today.

The crisis "represents the failure of federal and state emergency procedures in the face of diseases that can circle the globe," Lantos said at a hearing of the House Government Reform Committee, adding, "In this day of expanded international travel and the shadow of international terrorism, that has wide-ranging implications."

Lantos noted that committee staff had recently received documents that raise serious questions about federal oversight of public health care.

"The documents show that the FDA was aware of major problems at the vaccine manufacturing facility as early as June 2003, but the FDA repeatedly missed opportunities to address the problems," Lantos said. "I am stunned by this utter lack of action by an agency charged with protecting public health that seemed to be deluded into a fantasy that things were getting better on their own."

Lantos suggested that in addition to reviewing FDA oversight procedures, Congress should consider ways to establish incentives for more manufacturers to supply flu vaccine, such as tax credits or buyback programs, so that the future flu vaccine supply could come from a broader array of sources.

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